

Portrait of Maquoketa is a compilation of 180 individual oil portraits of Maquoketa residents painted between July 2005 and July 2006. Ms. Frantzen's exceptional skill is evident in each portrait, but the paintings are more striking when displayed together.

Ms. Frantzen describes Portrait of Maquoketa as "an unfiltered representation of this small Iowa community at this time in history." Unlike many portraits that are commissioned or collected by people with a distinct interest in art, Ms. Frantzen took a democratic approach to her work and opened her storefront studio to any Maquoketa who wished to pose for her. She painted children, adults, seniors and adolescents. During the sittings she conducted informal interviews and later made audio recordings of her neighbors' stories, ideas, and beliefs. Many of these recordings are part of the installation at the Portrait Gallery.

The individuals in Portrait of Maquoketa don't look distinctly Iowan. There are no clues in the paintings indicating they have any relationship to each other. Together, though, we recognize these individuals are also a community with a shared identity and future. In each portrait Ms. Frantzen expresses the dignity and beauty in her neighbors, and together her paintings proclaim the dignity and beauty of Maquoketa.

Madam Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to visit the National Portrait Gallery to see Portrait of Maquoketa. It is an inspiring interpretation of American life.